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EXHIBIT S  
DATE 1/25/07  
HB 292



## 2007 Montana Legislative Priorities

### City of Billings

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## **2007 MONTANA LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES**

### **Local Government Powers**

**The City of Billings strongly supports local control and self governing powers and the authority of local voters and elected mayors and councils to determine city and town issues. The City strongly resists legislative proposals and agency policies that would substitute state authority for local control.**

**The City of Billings supports, in general, the Montana League of Cities & Towns 2007 Legislative Resolutions.**

### **Finance & Taxation**

**The City of Billings is committed to protecting the financial stability and discretion of cities and towns. The City supports: 1) An overall tax approach that is fair and balanced for the citizens of Montana and offers a diversification of tax revenues; 2) A tax base that provides funding to promote economic growth and provides for necessary services and infrastructure to keep pace with the demands of growth; 3) Legislation that promotes financial stability through grant and loan assistance for capital improvements and other programs; 4) Continuation of and full funding for the Entitlement Program. Finally, the City opposes unfunded mandates.**

## **Community & Regional Private/Public Coalitions & Partnerships**

**THE CITY OF BILLINGS SUPPORTS LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES THAT ENHANCE PRIVATE/PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS AND COALITIONS, AT THE COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL LEVEL, TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL OUR CITIZENS.**

### **Quality Education**

The City of Billings supports quality education in our community from pre-school through higher education and the resources necessary to ensure it. We support continued development of a strong two year community college with vocational and technical components, both 2 and 4 year degrees in health-related areas and the development of a research and development component at the university level.

### **Quality Health Care**

The City of Billings supports the continued quality health care, education and research provided by our medical corridor for our community and the greater region and the resources necessary for future success. We also support improved access to health care and human service benefits for all children, adults and families.

### **Economic Development**

The City of Billings supports multiple strategies to maximize its economic and community potential and supports economic development for our region as well, including venture capital formation and workforce training incentives.

### **Veteran's Cemetery**

The City of Billings supports Yellowstone County in their efforts to establish a Veteran's Cemetery within Yellowstone County, to honor those who have served our country.

Approved By Billings City Council  
12/18/06

**Public Health, Safety and City  
Employee Relations**

**THE CITY OF BILLINGS SUPPORTS AND PROMOTES PUBLIC SAFETY AND HEALTH. MUNICIPALITIES PROVIDE POLICE, FIRE, EMERGENCY MEDICAL AND OTHER SERVICES THAT PROTECT HOMES, BUSINESSES AND THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS.**

The City of Billings will support and/or monitor the following legislation:

- Primary enforcement of safety belt laws under state and local ordinance.
- Primary enforcement of helmet laws under state and local ordinance.
- Enhancing Emergency Communication Services, State 911 Commission recommendations and funding of same.
- Allowing suspended firefighters to accept the disciplinary action and waive the right to a hearing before the City Council or the personnel review board.
- Requiring that the "Last Best Offer Package" in police arbitration be submitted no later than 14 days prior to the hearing. Under current law the package can be submitted at any time within 14 days of the hearing.
- Public health/disease related legislation.
- Public Employees Retirement System.
- State Library Board and other library legislation.
- Family Drug Court legislation.
- Mental health/co-occurring funding.
- Fire District contracts with Class One cities.

**VOTER APPROVED LOCAL OPTION/RESORT TAX  
AUTHORITY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

The City supports legislation to remove limitations in the current resort tax law to allow all communities the opportunity, through voter approval, to implement such a tax and for what purposes they choose, such as taxing goods and services directly connected to the tourist economy.

**ACCOMODATIONS TAX DISTRIBUTION**

The City supports legislation to distribute 3% of the accommodations tax to the local governments where it is collected to cover the cost of services and facilities. The City supports a voter approved local option lodging tax not to exceed 3%.

**BUSINESS EQUIPMENT TAXES**

The City supports legislation to reimburse local governments for the loss of revenue that occurred when the tax exemption on business equipment was increased to \$20,000.

**TAX INCREMENT FINANCE** The City supports continuation of Tax Increment Finance Districts that allow municipalities to invest in the re-development of our urban business and residential areas.

**OTHER**

The City will support and/or monitor legislation to:

- Revise the Public Defender Law to require that the growth factor for the Entitlement Program be applied before assessments are subtracted.
- Clarify the law on the phase-in of property values after each reappraisal cycle and its application to new construction.
- Allow local governments to attach insurance claim payments to cover the cost of demolishing structures that have been damaged or destroyed by fire or other causes.

- Prohibit state agencies from requiring unreasonable indemnification clauses as a condition of loans made to local governments.
- Allow cities and towns to adopt separate water and sewer rates for low income residents.
- Fund continuation of the Main Street Program at the level recommended in the executive budget.
- Require written requests for reproduction of public information.
- Monitor all bills relating to Shiloh Road in Billings.

### **Land Use, Property & Environmental Regulation**

#### **ANNEXATION AND DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

The City of Billings strongly supports legislation that promotes local authority to provide services, manage operations and decide on local issues. The City supports local authority over planning and zoning, over regulation of subdivisions and other developments, over protection of annexation rights, and over the right to impose development and impact fees to ensure that new development pays a share of the cost of the services and facilities that are required to accommodate growth.

The City supports legislation to:

- Eliminate restrictions on annexation authority for wholly surrounded properties when the annexation is in accordance with a growth policy.
- Clarify subdivision exemptions to:
  - ◊ Eliminate outright "court ordered" subdivision exemptions and require notification and comment by the governing body.
  - ◊ Establish requirements for a "mortgage" subdivision exemption.

- ◊ Require all divisions of land exempt from subdivision review to provide for utility easements and legal and physical access.

#### **APPROPRIATE REGULATORY AUTHORITY**

The City supports affirming municipal building codes enforcement authority. Public and life safety standards and services are essential to ensure consumer protection.

The City will support and/or monitor legislation to:

- Allow both a City and City-County Planning Board to serve as a zoning commission, by modifying the membership requirements.
- Modify and streamline the purpose and criteria for zone changes.
- Monitor all eminent domain bills that would further restrict the authority of local governments and private utilities to condemn property.

#### **PRIVATIZATION**

The City will monitor all legislation regarding privatization of public services, products and facilities. The City currently contracts with the private sector when it is in the best interests of residents, but will oppose any attempts to privatize areas such as solid waste services and parks and recreation, that could result in higher costs, limited access, loss of oversight and accountability, as well as other unanticipated consequences.